

# The Effectiveness Of Using Digital Photographs On Teaching Writing Narrative Text For English For Specific Purposes

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**Abstract:** The paper reports a study which aims at exploring the effectiveness of digital photographs in helping students to achieve higher writing performance. This research uses quasi experimental design. The participants were two groups of Arabic Literature department of Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Malang which were drawn using random sampling technique. The findings indicate that the posttest result of experimental and control groups are significantly different. The findings suggest that the implementation of digital photographs in the teaching of writing helps the students gain higher scores than the students who are taught using story starters.

**Key Words:** digital photographs, photographs, narrative text, story starters, writing

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan efektivitas foto digital dalam membantu siswa untuk mencapai kinerja menulis yang lebih tinggi. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain eksperimen kuasi. Subjek dalam penelitian ini adalah dua kelompok yang berasal dari Prodi Sastra Arab Universitas Islam Negeri Malang Maulana Malik Ibrahim yang diambil menggunakan teknik random sampling. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa hasil posttest dari kelompok eksperimen dan kontrol berbeda secara signifikan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pelaksanaan foto digital dalam pengajaran menulis membantu siswa memperoleh skor yang lebih tinggi daripada siswa yang diajar menggunakan cerita permulaan.

**Kata kunci:** foto digital, foto, narasi teks, cerita permulaan, menulis

Writing holds a key role to develop the students' thoughts and ideas. Writing could be a powerful instrument of thinking because it provides students with a way of gaining control over their thoughts. This is because when the students try to write their ideas, they also start to think about how to deliver their ideas to the readers (Gere, 1985:3). Teachers know that writing begins with good thinking, which is why writing also could be called as a creative process.

Students must be given time to write according to the writing processes needed as supported by Gere who said that in order to know the ability of the students in writing; teachers must get them to write (Gere, 1985:16). But it is not as easy as it seems because writing is the most complicated skill compared to other four skills, even for native speakers. The first basic problem of writing is to find and explore the right ideas. Generating ideas is crucial to the success of any writing. The second difficulty is the

lack of motivation for the students to write related to the strategy implemented by the lecturers. The third reason why writing becomes hard is because of the lack of time to write since the writing stages are needed before the students complete the text. The last one is the difficulty to find appropriate media in writing which can engage the students' participation in learning.

One of the most advantageous media is photograph. Photographs do not require decoding because they convey information literally, which means every single photo can be interpreted in many ways into words because every student has visual literacy ability; the ability to understand, interpret and evaluate visual images. Photograph also can share the directness and emotive power of spoken language and the permanence of text. It gives viewers the opportunity to examine the information in their own perspective (Rose et.al, 2002:61).

In the classroom, students need media and materials which enable them to prepare the real condition of the world outside. Therefore, materials and media must give value and meaning for the students because it will provide more opportunity for teachers and students to truly integrate the media education into real educational setting and real life (Leaning, 2009:209) to build the media-literacy which means the students are taught to be able to get information and critical understanding of the nature, techniques, and the impact of the media (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1995 in Kenny, 2004:72).

The digital photographs are chosen because in the final writing process the students must present their works in front of their classmates. The digital photographs used in this activity are presented through slides presentation using LCD projector. The digital photographs are shown in each meeting of the drafting process to activate the visual rhetoric ability of the students and how they express the photograph into writing text.

In this research, the students are guided to write narrative text by using digital photographs. The purpose of narrative text is to amuse and entertain the readers. Narrative text helps the students to express themselves creatively and imaginatively. In this research, the students are required to make narrative essay based according to digital photographs.

This research was conducted in regular class of Arabic Language and Literature of English for Specific Purposes named PPBI (English Language Center Program) in State Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. PPBI is a program of English course in State Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang for the students of all departments (except English Department) of third and fourth semesters.

### METHOD

This research uses quasi-experimental research design. The purpose of this research is to investigate whether there is any difference in achievement in students' writing taught by using digital photographs than those taught using story starter.

Quasi-experimental design is chosen because it is impossible for the researcher to randomize the subjects to the intended conditions. This was due to the fact that moving the students from one class to another in order to get the ideal groups for the sake of the experiment is not allowed. Wiersma stated that when the researcher conducts educational research,

it is not always possible to select or assigned subjects at random (1991:135). Therefore, class F and class G of the PPBI regular classes of the Arabic Language and Literature of Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Malang batch 2012, were taken as the subjects of this research because the researcher teaches those students and already knows the condition of the class. The research design used is pretest-posttest, nonequivalent control group design. An important component of the quasi-experimental study is the use of pretesting or analysis of prior achievement to establish group equivalence (Ross and Morrison, 2001: 1023). The purpose of the pretest greatly aids in checking the similarity of the groups, because the pretest scores are on variables that have a strong relationship with the dependent variable and the pretest scores would be used as statistical measurement to compare the result of the posttest scores (Wiersma, 1991:140).

At the beginning of experiment, the subjects in both control and experimental groups were tested to examine the initial mastery of the subjects' writing competence prior to the treatment. After that, the experimental group was exposed to the students' digital photographs approach in the writing class while the control group underwent a teaching process using story starters. Finally, after the experimentation, the students' mastery on writing was measured. The test employed in the posttest was the one used in the pretest. Eventually, the scores obtained by both control and experimental groups from the posttest were compared using the pretest scores to investigate the effect of the treatment on the students' writing competence.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before calculating the significance different of the experimental and control groups posttest scores, the researcher calculated the means scores of pretest in order to measure the homogeneity, equality, and evaluating differences. To test the hypothesis of this research, the researcher must measure the null hypothesis (symbolized as  $H_0$ ). In this research, the null hypothesis is "the implementation of digital photographs in teaching writing does not help the students gain higher scores than the students who are taught using story starters." After that, the data gained from the pretest were analyzed using independent t-test.

The independent t-test was used when the data were already normal and homogeneous. Thus, Levene's test was employed to test the homogeneity

**Table 1. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances**

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Group	Equal variances assumed	.009	.924	.144	38	.886	.22500	1.56482	-2.94281	3.39281
	Equal variances not assumed			.144	37.973	.886	.22500	1.56482	-2.94288	3.39288

of data before t-test, with alpha 0.05 or 95% confidence. If the probability level or significance level is greater than 0.05 ( $p > 0.05$ ), it means that there is no significance difference between the two groups in terms of normality and homogeneity.

The mean scores were used to get the calculation of equality of variances by using Levene's test. The highlighted numbers show the mean scores which were calculated by SPSS (Table 1).

Levene's test for Equality of Variances was used to check whether or not the assumption of homogeneity of variances is violated. As shown in Table 1 the significance value is 0.886 ( $> 0.05$ ). It means that  $H_0$  is accepted. In other words, the variances in the pretest are equal or homogenous. Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variances is not violated.

After calculating the data gathered from pretest, the researcher compared them with the posttest scores. The item statistics of pretest and posttest scores from both groups are presented in Table 2.

The result of the posttest showed that the mean score of the experimental group was 18.0050 while the control group was 16.5450. In addition, the mean difference of the posttest score between the experimental and control group was 1.46.

Based on the result of the calculation of posttests from experimental and control groups, the p-value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05 (5%). It indicates that the posttest result of experimental and control groups

are significantly different. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted which means that the implementation of digital photographs in the teaching of writing helps the students gain higher scores than the students who are taught using story starters.

The statistical calculation on students' writing in control group showed marginal mean increasing. Since, the students' pretest mean score in control group was 15.3520. On the other, in the posttest of control group, the mean was 16.5450, which increased 1.193. While in the experimental group, the marginal mean score in pretest was 15.5500 and in posttest was 18.0050. The mean increased 2.455. The increasing mean of control group was lower than the increasing mean of experimental group ( $1.193 < 2.455$ ). Those statistical calculations proved that the students who were taught using digital photographs performed better in writing narrative than those taught using story starters.

From the practical view, the research finding indicated that digital photographs can contribute to the improvement of students' writing skill. This was probably because of some reasons.

Firstly, the using of digital photographs in writing narrative text is a good choice because digital photographs can tell stories. Wright (2003:75) maintains that besides telling stories, digital photographs also can suggest stories. This means, students are free to use their imagination play with the digital photographs to create a new story line. The implementation of digital photographs in the pre-writing step helped the students to read the picture in order to give them the idea for writing. Calhoun (1999:68) states that digital photographs can develop the students' observational skill before writing. Also, a photograph can motivate the young writers to begin writing. It could be seen from the different perceptions of each student about the photographs which were shown. They were encour-

**Table 2. The result of Pretest and Posttest of the Experimental and Control Groups**

	Item Statistics		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PreExpG	15.5500	5.01393	20
PreCtrlG	15.3250	4.88196	20
PostExpG	18.0050	4.35388	20
PostCtrlG	16.5450	5.02933	20

aged to write the narrative text based on their own perception and imagination.

Secondly, digital photographs have tremendous power to communicate information if we interpret them carefully. Reading digital photographs presents a unique set of challenges. Students can learn to use questions to decode, evaluate, and respond to digital photographs. People may interpret one single photograph differently since it is their decision about how they read it (Thibault and Walbert, 2013). Students are able to interpret the explicit information in the digital photographs and even the implicit ones which are not captured inside, which means that they were able to add several characters and events in their writing narrative texts even though the characters and events which were inside the photographs were limited.

Thirdly, according to the result of students' writings, the using of digital photographs could help the students expand their thoughts through one single picture. It means, the students could write the whole narrative text in an appropriate generic structure only by looking at one photo. The students were able to create the orientation up to resolution; it could be seen in most of the students' writing. This was because before the lecturer showed the digital photographs, she first asked some questions to the students and requested them to look closely and pay fully attention to the photograph. The goal of asking those questions was to encourage richer and avoided ones that were merely superficial (Elbow, 2008:79).

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusions

Based on the research problem and the result of data analysis, it can be concluded statistically that students who were taught using digital photographs shows significant higher writing narrative text achievement than those taught using story starters with significant value =  $0.00 < 0.05$ . In other words, it is proven that digital photographs are more effective in helping students achieve higher writing narrative text score since the different marginal means of post-test between control and experimental groups was 1.46 and the students were trained to be more active learners.

Practically, there are positive attitudes from the students towards the implementation of digital photographs in teaching writing narrative text. First, digital

photographs help the students to get ideas in writing narrative text because they can generate ideas from the digital photographs shown. Second, digital photographs can relax the students' mind because they are colorful and presented on LCD projector. Third, choosing the right digital photographs can encourage the students to find the moral values in the stories. The students are triggered to get the moral values by being asked the critical questions related to the digital photographs which are shown.

All in all it can be concluded that the results of the study supported the basic assumption on the nature of the writing in which writing is a process where the writer explores the writers' thought, feeling and idea and shares them with the reader (Richards & Renandya, 2002; Jacobs et al., 1981). It means that students' ideas and thoughts play an important role in motivating the students to write.

The advantages of colorfulness, richness of stories, and the moral values implicated in digital photographs can motivate the students to begin to write compared to the using of story starters. It can be seen in the students' pretension in expressing their ideas onto written forms. This is different with the students of the control group who are more reluctant to begin to write because the story starters are plain and do not contain colorful pictures. Moreover, the triggering incomplete sentence in story starters limit the students' mind in exploring the imaginations and gathering ideas.

### Suggestions

In short, teachers or lecturers should adapt or adopt the stages in applying digital photographs strategies in teaching writing rather than story starters. It is further suggested to start training students to create critical questions more and provide extended time to finish each step of strategies. It is recommended to add more variables to gain better investigation result.

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